

SECTION III

JUNE 14, 2003 WORKSHOP

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT PRIORITIES

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

This section identifies the primary capital improvement projects that Workshop participants agreed upon. This workshop was designed to provide participants with the opportunity to present their group ideas from the prior workshop and to express their views with regard to all of the topic areas and projects presented.

On Saturday, June 14th, workshop participants established five new groups. Each group reviewed all of the topic areas, capital improvement projects, and design solutions that had been recommended the previous day. The reconfigured groups then prioritized capital improvement projects and

presented to the full group those they deemed as the most important.

A number of themes and common recommendations emerged through this process. The subsequent pages include these recommendations, as well as supporting images and other reference material. It is important to note that the following recommendations must be further studied prior to formal planning and implementation.



POCKET PARKS

Pocket, “vest-pocket”, or “mini-parks” are an important component of healthy, multi-use town centers. They add to the quality of life for residents and act as community gathering places. Pocket parks contribute to the aesthetic, economic, and environmental value of their surroundings.

Historically, pocket parks range in size from twenty feet wide to three acres in size (Marcus, 1998), depending on the desired uses of the park. Because of this flexibility in size and design, numerous vacant lots within and around the town center could potentially park sites.

Research indicates that most users of mini-parks will come from within a one to two-block radius (Marcus, 1998). For this reason, these outdoor recreation areas may be of the highest value when located within or adjacent to higher density residential areas and senior housing developments.

A wide variety of park types and amenities may be included in a mini-park depending on the desires of the local residents. Pocket parks may provide passive and/ or active recreational opportunities, depending on the demographic of the residents who are most likely to utilize them. For example, parks in neighborhoods with young families or located near child-friendly businesses may be designed as play lots with features such as jungle gyms and benches from which adults may passively observe. Pocket parks located near homes

predominantly occupied by seniors may have passive recreational amenities such as paved walking paths, shade trees, benches, and picnic tables. Whenever possible, pocket parks should be in a visible location that invites spontaneous community interaction and enhances user safety.

The Design Workshop participants identified a number of potential community park locations:

- Main Street- Behind Ramona Hotel
- Behind Future Library
- Main Street & Kelly
- Between automotive uses & Denny’s.

In addition, lots that may be too small or constrained to support development may make excellent passive parks.





PARKING

Along with traffic calming on Main Street, a major goal of the Design Workshops was to create suitable parking options that serve local businesses and pedestrians. Diagonal or on-street parking and shared parking lots would support local businesses and foster a safe, pedestrian friendly downtown environment.

Most retail stores rely, or potentially rely, on a variety of customer types to maintain their operations. For instance, on a given day customers using numerous different modes of transportation and with divergent time parameters may frequent the same retail district. Some customers may seek to retain a specific product or service and are interested in completing their shopping as quickly as possible. Diagonal parking in front of stores allows businesses to readily provide services to these customers. Diagonal parking also provides a street buffer for pedestrians who may have parked in a community lot with the intention of shopping at a number of locations within several blocks. For these customers, arcades leading from rear parking lots to businesses on Main Street increases the accessibility of targeted shopping while also creating a comfortable means of reaching multiple venues. Community parking lots near retail businesses support economically viable, vibrant districts in which pedestrians thrive and motorists are invited to stop and walk along Main Street.



SUCCESS STORY Fallbrook, CA

According to “Walkable Communities, 2004” a community should first develop a parking management plan for its downtown area, and then adopt regulations that best support the plan. The Fallbrook Revitalization Plan recently adopted by the County of San Diego may be used as a model for the development of parking regulations for Ramona’s town center. The Fallbrook Plan states, “Parking regulations should be tailored to encourage shared parking and ensure sufficient parking to serve businesses in the area without exceeding the needs of the community”. The Plan outlines additional policies and regulatory tools for enforcing this concept. This strategy has also been successfully employed in Carlsbad, Coronado, and La Mesa, CA. For more information, contact the County of San Diego Department of Planning and Land Use at 858-694-2960.



HOUSING

Two priority housing objectives were established during the Workshops- the creation of attainable housing and the development of senior housing.

ATTAINABLE HOUSING

According to real estate professionals in Ramona, the average cost of a single-family home in Ramona is currently between \$385,000 to \$400,000. In addition to this prohibitive price range, the spectrum of housing types available in the community has remained fairly limited to single-family homes on larger lots, or apartment homes in the western portion of the town center. These two factors have had serious consequences for young adults and for senior citizens wishing to remain in the community over the long term. Specifically, younger adults and those with young families have had difficulty finding attainable housing that meets their needs, while seniors have limited options for housing that accommodates changing lifestyle requirements.

The creation of various home types that support a vibrant town center and are presumably more economically attainable was a key objective for the Workshop participants. Smaller cottage homes exist in areas such as the eastern portions of D Street and other more established neighborhoods in Ramona. These homes are considered by many to be representative of Ramona's historic character and

to reinforce the local charm. A spectrum of well-designed attached homes and more compact single-family homes would provide variety in cost and style for residents at various life stages. Community-specific design that reflects the historic, rural character of the community would be ensured through a set of town center design standards emerging from the overall vision for the town center.



Figure 3.1: Pictured above is a design concept for attached, possibly age restricted, homes. The home designs feature the use of earth tones and neutral colors, a variety of materials and textures, and reflect the rural character of the community

Required design elements may include but are not limited to the use of earth tones and neutral colors, a variety of materials and textures, such as those pictured in Figure 3.2.

SENIOR HOUSING

The need for senior housing is increasing throughout the nation and in Ramona. As the average lifespan and vitality of Americans increases, so has the need for various living arrangements to cater to seniors with differing interests and activity levels (Marcus 1998).

In informal conversations, aging Ramonans of all lifestyles and mobility levels have expressed that remaining in the community of Ramona and maintaining independence are top priorities. This is consistent with the trend reflected in a national survey by the American Association of Retired Persons which indicated that, should it become necessary, nearly 60 percent of respondents would choose an assisted living facility or care home over the option of living with family or friends (Marcus, 1998).

Many seniors indicate that they would like the option of transitioning from larger homes and acreages to more manageable properties closer to the town center.



Figure 3.2: Mixed use allows for the option of residential apartments above retail stores. Some seniors may desire the accessibility to services, civic amenities, and transportation that this type of housing may provide.



NATURE CENTER

The Nature Center is envisioned as a multi-faceted educational facility serving Ramona and surrounding communities.

The physical design of the Nature Center would reflect the rural character and natural elements of the area. While existing buildings may be used for the Center, ideally the building would be consistent with the town center design themes presented in this document and resulting design standards. An open or covered outdoor component may be incorporated in the Center design in order to provide access to vernal pools or other outdoor flora and fauna.

This interpretive center would provide an opportunity for residents to learn about the local environment and wildlife in a hands-on fashion. It would also serve as a science library

including an array of general science information and materials specific to Ramona's natural ecosystems.

Possible highlights of the Nature Center could include a viable on-site vernal pool, native botanical garden, and butterfly vivarium. During the active season, visitors could view life in the pool and learn about this ecosystem and native plant life from docents and from informative kiosks. In addition, wildlife specimens and models could be on exhibit.

Locating the Nature Center in the Town Center would create a link between Ramona's natural communities and its civic center. It would also enhance conservation-related educational and volunteer opportunities for community members, including local students and seniors.



SUCCESS STORY

Tijuana Estuary, Imperial Beach, CA

Located in Imperial Beach, the Tijuana Estuary and visitors center offers the community a variety of hands on interactive activities for all ages as well as access to several nature trails. Estuary staff, volunteers, students and other interested agencies do a great deal of research, restoration and monitoring at the Tijuana Estuary. Their experience and the information and data they gather are intended to create a better understanding of the wetland and how it can be protected. The Tijuana Estuary has exciting, hands-on education programs for students as well as tours, informative lectures and other outreach opportunities for adult audiences. The Tijuana Estuary Visitors Center contributes to the community by offering free visits to elementary, middle and high school groups, youth groups, and other organizations.



TRAILS

Along with the Trails Master Plan currently being developed, the Ramona Community Plan establishes goals and objectives for a network of trails throughout the community. The role of trails as a key component of Ramona's town center and the community as a whole was confirmed through the Design Workshops.

In particular, citizens at the Design Workshop focused on the development of the Santa Maria River Park Greenway and a trail loop surrounding and extending past the boundaries of the town center (Figure 3.2). The group felt that multi-use trails along these areas were critical to support the equestrian activities that are a fundamental element of Ramona's character and that of its citizens.

Currently over 1,400 miles of trails extend through the County of San Diego. Twelve miles of trails exist in the community of Ramona. According to the trail miles per person ratio established by the County of San Diego, Ramona

should have 27 miles currently and 44 miles of trails by the year 2020 (see County of San Diego Draft Trails Master Plan, 2003). The trails envisioned at the workshop in some cases reflect those in the Master Plan. Other trails identified should be incorporated into the Master Plan. Special equestrian crossings could be provided at locations along Main Street identified in Section IV of this report. These crossings are envisioned to include pavement striping and crossing signals with special buttons located at a height that is accessible by equestrians. Signage should also be utilized to alert motorists of the upcoming crossing areas.

Examples across the United States demonstrate the value of trail systems to local jurisdictions, particularly those with growing populations. Though the advantages to such systems are difficult to quantify, accessible and well-maintained trails are widely known to have physical, psychological, and social benefits to citizens in the communities in which they are located.



SUCCESS STORIES

Many communities throughout the nation have developed greenways and extensive networks of trails and pathways. Portland, Oregon, San Antonio, Texas, and Sacramento, California are just a few places with nationally recognized river greenways. While many of these amenities are urban in design and serve more urban populations, rural trails systems provide the same recreational, social, and psychological benefits.

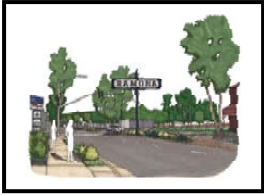
Local examples include the City of Carlsbad and the County of San Diego. Many trail networks are supported heavily by volunteer groups, such as the Carlsbad Volunteer Trails. Ramona is home to one of the most active communities of trail stewards in the unincorporated County. The Ramona Trails Association (RTA) and other groups build and maintain miles of trails and work to encourage the protection of related open space.

Information & Contacts:

American Trails www.americantrails.org

Ramona Trails Association, Ramona, CA <http://www.ramonatrails.org/>

County of San Diego, Draft Trails Master Plan www.sdcountry.ca.gov/parks/docs/trails/01ATOCtext.pdf



SIGNAGE

Signage is an important tool for establishing and reinforcing community identity. The design, nature and location of signs can provide locals and tourists alike with a strong sense of place- not only where things are, but the history of the community and the values of the current residents. Signage can also be used to provide a sense of comfort and safety if it is of a human scale, easily legible, and aesthetically harmonious.

More detailed design standards could be utilized to establish a hierarchy of sign types and design features, as well the appropriate use for each.





SUCCESS STORY

Encinitas, CA

A November, 2001 article from the North County Times reveals how appropriate signage can reinforce a sense of identity and character for communities in north San Diego County.

With dozens of anxious onlookers snapping photographs, the city reinstalled a landmark green and white "Encinitas" sign across Coast Highway 101 on Wednesday... For some longtime residents, the sign's installation stirred up old memories. Dave Young looked at the new sign and reminisced about his rebellious adolescence. He recalled riding his Indian motorcycle under the old sign in the 1930s... "It's a piece of history," Young said as he watched the crane lower the sign. "It tells you there's something worthwhile here."

There are different accounts about what happened to the old sign. It was knocked over by a truck, fell prey to fierce winds, or was removed when the road was widened more than 60 years ago, the stories go. Some people are just happy to see the sign back up. "It's a symbol," said Peder Norby, executive director of the Downtown Encinitas MainStreet Association as he stood below the sign. "This is where it all began. This is the heart and soul of Encinitas."

For more information, visit the City of Encinitas website at <http://www.ci.encinitas.ca.us/>.